



COVID-19

Test for Current Infection

Updated May 3, 2022



Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests: [Order 4 free tests now so you have them when you need them.](#) 

Viral Tests Look for Current Infection

- A viral test checks specimens from your nose or your mouth to find out **if you are currently infected** with the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Viral tests **do not** detect antibodies which would suggest a [previous infection](#) and they do not measure your level of immunity.
- Viral tests can be performed in a laboratory, at a testing site, [at home or anywhere else](#).

Learn what to do if you [test positive](#) or [test negative](#).

Viral Test Types

- **Laboratory** and **Rapid Point-of-Care** tests are performed in Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)-certified facilities to ensure quality of testing.
 - Laboratory tests can take days to complete and include RT-“PCR” tests and other types of nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs).
 - Rapid Point-of-Care tests can be performed in minutes and can include antigen tests, some NAATs, and [other tests](#).
- **Self-Tests** are rapid tests that can be taken at home or anywhere as long as the instructions are followed.

Learn more about the [types of COVID-19 tests](#).

When to Get Tested

Review the scenarios below to determine when to get tested. If you have had COVID-19 in the past 90 days and recovered, you do not need to be tested unless you develop new symptoms. If you develop new symptoms, [isolate](#) immediately and get tested. Continue to stay home until you know the results. Wear a well-fitted mask around others.

STEP 1 Do you have COVID-19 symptoms?

YES: Get tested immediately. Follow [quarantine guidance](#) while waiting for results.

NO: See Step 2.

STEP 2 Have you had close contact exposure to someone with COVID-19?

YES: Get tested at least 5 days after exposure. Follow [quarantine guidance](#) while waiting to test.

NO: See Step 3.

STEP 3 Do you need to test for ...

Travel?

Outside of United States:

- [All travelers](#): Follow destination requirements.
- If not up to date with your vaccines, get tested as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before your trip.

To the United States:

- [Air passengers \(2 years or older\)](#): Before boarding a flight to the United States, you **must** show a negative COVID-19 test result taken no more than 1 day before travel or Documentation of Recovery from COVID-19 in the past 90 days. [Foreign nationals](#) have an additional requirement for proof of COVID-19 vaccination.
- All travelers: Get tested 3-5 days after arrival in the United States.

Within the United States:

- [All travelers](#): Follow all state, tribal, local, and territorial health recommendations and requirements at your destination.
- If not up to date with your vaccines, get tested as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before your trip, and 3-5 days after travel.

NOTE: Cruise travel has different guidance. See [Cruise Ship Travel During COVID-19](#).

[More on Travel >](#)

Work or School?

Participate in screening program as required and/or recommended by work or school.

[More on Workplaces >](#)

[More on Schools >](#)

An Upcoming Event or Gathering?

- Reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 by getting tested as close to the event date as possible.
- Self-tests are one of several options for testing for the virus that causes COVID-19 and may be more convenient than laboratory-based tests and point-of-care tests.

[More on Self-Testing >](#)



COVID-19 Viral Testing Tool

A tool to help you understand COVID-19 testing options.

[Get Started](#)[About the Tool](#)

Where Can I Get a Test?

Visit your [state](#), [tribal](#), [local](#) [link](#), or [territorial](#) health department's website for the latest local information on testing.

Laboratory or Rapid Point-of-Care Tests

- Many pharmacies and community centers provide access to free COVID-19 tests. Visit [Community-Based Testing Centers](#) [link](#) or the [Increasing Community Access to Testing \(ICATT\)](#) website to find testing locations in your area.

Self-Tests

- Order free tests** at [COVIDtests.gov](#) [link](#). Free tests are also available through [local health departments](#).
- Buy tests** online or in pharmacies and retail stores. Private health insurance may reimburse the cost of purchasing self-tests. Visit [FDA's website](#) [link](#) for a list of authorized tests.
- If you're not able to obtain a self-test when you need it, you might also **visit a community testing site, or call your local health department** for more options.

What Your Test Results Mean



IF YOUR TEST IS

Positive

The test detected the virus and **you have an infection.**

- Stay home for at least 5 days and [isolate](#) from others in your home.
- Tell your [close contacts](#).
- Wear a [well-fitted mask](#) when around others. If available, a N95 or KN95 respirator is recommended.
- Watch for [symptoms](#). If you have any [emergency warning signs](#), seek emergency care immediately.
- Tell your healthcare provider. Contact them as soon as possible if:
 - Your symptoms get worse.
 - You are more likely to get very sick because you are an [older adult](#) or have an [underlying medical condition](#). [Possible treatment](#) may be available for you.
 - You have questions about your isolation.



IF YOUR TEST IS

Negative

The test did not detect the virus, **but doesn't rule out an infection.**

- If you have a negative test, but have symptoms of COVID-19:
 - You may have COVID-19, but tested before the virus was detectable, or you may have another illness, such as the flu.
 - Contact your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your test result, recommendations for quarantine or isolation, or your symptoms, especially if they worsen.

recommendations for quarantine or isolation, or your symptoms, especially if they worsen.

- If you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 but were a [close contact](#) to someone with COVID-19, and you tested negative 5 days after exposure:
 - The virus was not detected. You are likely not infected, but an infection cannot be completely ruled out.
 - Follow CDC's [Quarantine and Isolation](#) guidance, including monitoring for symptoms and wearing a well-fitting mask.
- If you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 and do not have a known exposure to a person with COVID-19:
 - You do not need to quarantine.

Take Steps to Protect Yourself



Whether you test positive or negative for COVID-19, you should take preventive measures to [protect yourself and others](#).

Additional Resources

DON'T DELAY: TEST SOON AND TREAT EARLY

| COVID-19 |

If you are at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, and test positive, treatment may be available.



Get tested as soon as possible after your symptoms start.

Don't Delay: Test Soon and Treat Early

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[Additional Languages](#)

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